Brandeis University
Department of Economics

August 2014 Newsletter for Majors and Minors

The Economics faculty and staff are pleased to welcome you back to Brandeis for the fall semester. We hope you had a great summer and are ready for the new school year!

On a personal note, I am delighted to serve the Brandeis community in my new role as Chair of the Economics Department. I am looking forward to meeting more economics students, and I hope that you will feel free to stop by the Economics offices to discuss your experience with the major or minor. You can also email me at ghall@brandeis.edu.

Fall registration

Registration for fall 2014 courses begins **Tuesday, August 19th** and runs through **Thursday, September 11th**. You can find a list of times and instructors for all courses related to econ that will appear during registration for the fall semester on the Econ website. You can also find a tentative list of our spring Econ courses being offered on the website as well.

If a course you hope to take is closed, please email Leslie Yancich (lesliy@brandeis.edu) to put your name on the course’s wait list. As space becomes available, professors will permit additional students to register. In most cases, seniors will be given priority over juniors, and juniors over sophomores. If you are on the waitlist and hoping to enroll, it is important to attend all of the classes (as long as they do not conflict with another course you are taking). Adding a course late does not excuse you from completing all required work. Any student who is on the wait list and cannot be accommodated this term will receive priority in the same course the next time it is offered; for all of our core courses, that will be the next semester. Students who have questions about registering for economics courses should also contact Leslie, the department administrator.

**Reminder**... The last day to drop a class is **Tuesday, October 14th**. Instructor’s permission is required.

Econometrics Research Practicum

Hal Varian, Chief Economist at Google, said

I keep saying the sexy job in the next ten years will be statisticians. People think I’m joking, but who would’ve guessed that computer engineers would’ve been the sexy job of the 1990s? The ability to take data—to be able to understand it, to process it, to extract value from it, to visualize it, to communicate it—that’s going to be a hugely important skill in the next decades ... Because now we really do have essentially free and ubiquitous data. So the complimentary scarce factor is the ability to understand that data and extract value from it.
If you are interested in further developing your quantitative research skills, check out Econ 194: Econometric Research Practicum. Econ 194a is a half-credit course that provides you the opportunity to write your own econometrics research paper on a topic of your choice. Students meet weekly to develop their ideas, discuss econometric techniques and present their work. Econ 184b is a prerequisite. Please see Professor Brainerd for further information.

Senior Honors Program

To graduate with honors in Economics, a student must maintain a GPA of at least 3.5 in all courses in the major and write a senior thesis. Juniors planning to write a thesis are advised to begin the process this term by discussing potential topics with faculty members or with Prof. Bui, who supervises the thesis-writing process and helps to match students with appropriate faculty advisors. Many Econ faculty members have suggested potential senior thesis research topics, and these are now available on the Economics Department website. Students who identify their topic early can use the summer to read background material or collect data. Students must complete an Econometrics course prior to enrolling in Econ 99a, the senior thesis course. For more information about the senior honors program, go to the Senior Honors Program section of the Econ website.

Advising

Prof. Coiner and Prof. Redenius, the current Undergraduate Advising Head, have prepared a detailed memo that answers many of the basic questions students may have about their academic program. This memo is on the Advice for Students page on the Economics Department website. Please take time to read it before meeting with your advisor or Prof. Redenius.

Changes to the Major Requirements for Students Entering in Fall 2014

The department has changed the Economics major requirements for students starting at Brandeis in fall 2014 or later. Calculus is now a major requirement rather than simply a prerequisite for Econ 80a, 82b, 83a, and 184b. The calculus requirement can be fulfilled in one of three ways: a) completing Math 10a, an equivalent course, or a more advanced calculus course with a grade of C- or above, b) scoring at least 4 on the AP Mathematics AB test or at least 3 on the AP Mathematics BC test, or c) passing a placement exam the department administers at the beginning of each semester. This fall, the exam is scheduled for Friday, September 5th, from 2:00-4:00 in Sachar 101 (Chancellor Suite). A sample of the placement exam can be found here. Students who would like to sign up for it should contact Leslie Yancich (lesliy@brandeis.edu). Please note, a student may only take this exam once.

Reminder: Calculus requirement for Econ 80a, 82b, 83a, and 184b.

Every student, regardless of when they entered Brandeis, must satisfy the calculus requirement before enrolling in Econ 80a, 82b, 83a, and 184b. (The calculus prerequisite can be satisfied in any of the three ways described above.) Students who have not satisfied the requirement in one of these ways will be removed from these courses.
New UDRs for 2014-2015

Peter Walton‘15 and Felix Liu Ku ‘15 will be continuing as Econ UDR’s next year. In addition, we have appointed two new UDRs: Vicky Liu’16, and Gabe Rosenblum’16. Please join us in welcoming them to the UDR program! Watch for new events throughout the year.

Department Blog

Be sure to check the department’s economics blog! You can find it here: http://blogs.brandeis.edu/economics/. We will be posting information on department events, faculty news and even some student submitted articles. Interested in submitting a post? Please email it to Leslie Yancich at lesley@brandeis.edu if you would like your submission to be considered for publishing on this site.

“Like” us on Facebook! Look for updates and events by following us on our Facebook page and spread the word around about current happenings here in the economics department.

Finally...

We hope that 2014-15 will be a productive, satisfying, and enjoyable year for our students. We especially urge our senior majors to take full advantage of the course offerings in the Economics Department before leaving campus for the last time in December or next May.

Good luck!

George Hall
Chair